



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

SENATOR CHUCK GRASSLEY, OF IOWA - CHAIRMAN

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For Immediate Release

Friday, Oct. 17, 2003

Grassley Urges President to Consider Ag Concerns Before U.S.-Thailand Trade Agreement

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Committee on Finance, last night urged President Bush to consider Thailand's position on market access for U.S. agricultural products before initiating negotiations on a U.S.-Thailand trade agreement.

The text of Grassley's letter follows.

October 16, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I understand that you are considering commencing negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement with Thailand.

I strongly support your pursuit of bilateral free trade agreements that will further open foreign markets to U.S. exports of goods and services, particularly U.S. agricultural exports. In fact, given the recent collapse of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in Cancun, Mexico, it is even more imperative that the United States pursue ambitious bilateral free trade agreements. U.S. agricultural producers and exporters deserve no less from our trade negotiators.

I must point out, however, that during WTO negotiations in Cancun, a number of countries, including Thailand, joined together to form the so-called G-21 coalition. It is my perception that these countries sought major concessions in the area of agriculture from developed countries such as the United States while at the same time refusing to accept any meaningful concessions on agricultural market access for themselves.

In my view, the "one-way street" approach demonstrated by the G-21 in the agricultural negotiations at Cancun is neither acceptable nor realistic. I cannot support trade agreements, whether they are under the auspices of the WTO or bilateral agreements, that do not offer significant

opportunities for U.S. exporters. Before initiating negotiations with Thailand, I would urge you to obtain a firm commitment from the Government of Thailand that it will provide meaningful and timely market access for U.S. agricultural exports and remove other unjustified impediments to U.S. products. Repudiation by the Government of Thailand of the unbalanced approach displayed in Cancun by the G-21 would be a good first step.

Thank you for taking my concerns into account. I wish you every success as you continue to press for increased economic growth and prosperity through meaningful trade liberalization around the world.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley